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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000643

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR D, SA, SA/INS, S/CT; NSC FOR E. MILLARD  
LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [JA](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Protesting "exclusion" from April 14 seminar,  
Tigers say they might not attend conference in June

Refs: (A) Colombo-SA/INS 04/14/03 fax  
- (B) OpsCenter-Colombo 04/13/03 telecon  
- (C) FBIS Reston Va DTG 121213Z Apr 03  
- (D) Colombo 589, and previous

(U) Classified by Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of  
Mission. Reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

1. (SBU) In a public statement issued late April 12, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization announced that it was reviewing its decision to participate in the donors conference scheduled to be held in Tokyo in June. The statement, which was posted on the pro-LTTE website "TamilNet" and faxed to SA/INS, said this "review" was necessitated by the group's "deliberate exclusion" from the State Department-sponsored Washington seminar re Sri Lanka being held on April 14. (Note: The LTTE is on the Foreign Terrorist Organization list, and, thus, was not issued an invitation to participate in the April 14 meeting -- See Ref D.)

2. (SBU) The statement makes no direct mention of the U.S. (Note: Previous statements by the Tigers on this issue have accused the U.S. of trying to "isolate" the Tigers by not inviting them to Washington.) It also does not indicate that the group has any plans to end its engagement in the peace process. The group, for example, does not threaten to end its participation in the ongoing peace talks with the Sri Lankan government, nor does it threaten to stop cooperating with the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). The statement, however, does hit out hard against the GSL and the Norwegian government facilitators, complaining that they picked the wrong venue (i.e., Washington) to hold the seminar (as the LTTE could not attend). The statement also goes on to criticize what the LTTE sees as the GSL's failure to draw down the military's "high security zones" in Jaffna, stating:

"The irreconcilable attitude of the Sri Lankan military hierarchy, and the impotence of (Prime Minister) Ranil Wickremesinghe's administration have made all programs of resettling and rehabilitating hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees and IDPs (displaced persons) unrealizable. The very efficacy of the negotiating process has become questionable since decisions and agreements reached at the peace talks are not being implemented (thus) eroding the confidence of the Tamil people."

3. (C) With Sri Lanka completely shut down in celebration of Sinhalese and Tamil New Year, there has been little reaction to the LTTE's statement as of yet. We managed to reach two Tamil contacts, however.

4. N. Raviraj, a MP for the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) who has a difficult relationship with the LTTE (see Ref D), told us that many Tamils were talking about the LTTE's statement. Raviraj said Tamils he had spoken with felt that it was very unfortunate that the group was speaking of possibly boycotting a conference meant to bring aid to the war-torn north/east. V. Thevaraj, editor of "Virakesari," a Tamil-language newspaper, thought that the LTTE's announcement was not a "good thing" for the peace process. He said the announcement was clearly sparked by the Tigers' deep anger at not being invited to the Washington seminar.

5. (C) COMMENT: The LTTE's announcement is clearly a highly emotional one. In making the statement, however, it is positive that the group did not threaten to withdraw from the peace talks. (Note: The seventh round of talks is scheduled to take place April 29 - May 2 in Bangkok, although the venue may be changed due to the SARS epidemic.) That said, the language used in the statement re the GSL is quite sharp. The Tigers' threat to boycott the donors conference is a bit bizarre. As mentioned above, a key aspect of the meeting is to organize assistance to the north and east, including LTTE-controlled areas. The Tigers, of course, have a long history of cutting off their nose to spite their face, but their threat to boycott the conference

could well be a bluff given their clear interest in seeing it go forward. END COMMENT.

15. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS